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SUBJECT: SITREP 2: MORE ON DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY RULE
IN THE PHILIPPINES

REF: MANILA 830

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a meeting with the diplomatic corps late February 24, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and National Security Advisor Norberto Gonzales downplayed the impact of the State of Emergency Declaration made earlier that day, defending it as a necessary response to Opposition and leftist destabilizers. The situation in Manila continues to be calm, as in the rest of the country. No serious incidents of violence have been reported. EAC met mid-afternoon and approved a Warden message. EAC will meet again on the afternoon of February 25th. Mission has put it in place a 24-hour task force to monitor events. Embassy issued a statement on February 24, after considerable press interest (text in para 7). End Summary.

¶2. (U) Foreign Secretary Romulo and National Security Advisor Norberto Gonzales sought to assure the diplomatic community on February 24 that the declaration of a State of Emergency issued by President Arroyo earlier that day (reftel) did not represent an expansion of executive power. Secretary Romulo repeatedly asserted that the declaration

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granted no extraordinary powers to the President, that human rights and due process would not be curtailed, and that it was meant as a warning only to "misguided people." He said he expected that everyday life for Filipinos and foreign nationals would be "largely unaffected" and the situation that required the measures would subside "in no time." Romulo and Gonzales both assured the diplomatic corps that the government would operate according to existing laws, which were strong enough to deal with those who openly conduct armed rebellion and plot destabilization.

¶3. (SBU) Gonzales said that the "State of Emergency" was necessary because "the political contest had gone too far." He said it is imperative to separate those who engage in legitimate political discourse from those who do not respect the process. He offered as examples the Communist Party of the Philippines, whom he accused of using the might of its 8,000-member armed wing to influence the political contest for power, and members of the military who advocate operating outside the chain of command. Gonzales promised to work constructively with legitimate political groups but to bring the "full force of the law" down on those who advocate violence or destabilization.

¶4. (U) The situation in Manila continues to be calm, as in the rest of the country. Traffic is moving relatively normally in Manila, though some tie-ups are reported. Despite the GRP's revocation of all rally permits earlier in

the day, an Opposition rally involving several thousand protesters was still taking place in Makati City, the country's business center, as of 1800. The rally has drawn many Opposition luminaries. Former President Cory Aquino again publicly called on President Arroyo to make "the supreme sacrifice." Supporters of former president Joseph Estrada also continued to rally outside a hospital, where he is a patient, in the San Juan area of Manila. Several participants in rallies have been arrested, including Randy David, a well-known university professor and critic of Arroyo's. No serious incidents of violence have been reported. Former president Fidel Ramos has announced that he will be holding a press conference on the afternoon of February 25.

15. (U) Armed Forces Chief of Staff Generoso Senga, when asked at a press conference about U.S. troops in the south, particularly in the Balikatan 2006 exercise and those deployed to assist in Leyte for mudslide relief, stressed that the declaration of a State of Emergency did not involve them in any way.

16. (U) EAC met again mid-afternoon and approved an updated Warden message. EAC will meet again on the afternoon of February 25. Mission has put it in place a 24-hour task force to monitor events. There are no reports of incidents involving Amcits.

17. (U) At COB, Embassy issued following statement, following numerous press inquiries:

quote

Statement: State of Emergency in the Philippines

President Arroyo declared a State of National Emergency on February 24. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Romulo briefed the diplomatic corps on the declaration on the same day. The

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U.S. Government is monitoring the situation in the Philippines very closely. The U.S. Embassy has issued a Warden Message to American citizens in the Philippines, advising them to take prudent steps to ensure their personal safety during this uncertain time. We call on the Government of the Philippines and the Filipino people to respect fully the rule of law, protect civil liberties and human rights, and reject violence.

end quote

18. (U) Attached below is the text of the Proclamation of Emergency Rule:

Begin text:

MALACANANG PALACE
MANILA

PROCLAMATION NO. 1017

PROCLAMATION DECLARING A STATE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, over these past months, elements in the political opposition have conspired with authoritarians of the extreme Left represented by the NDF-CPP-NPA and the extreme Right, represented by military adventurists-the historical enemies of the democratic Philippine State-who are now in a tactical alliance and engaged in a concerted and systematic conspiracy, over a broad front, to bring down the duly-constituted Government elected in May 2004;

WHEREAS, these conspirators have repeatedly tried to bring down the President;

WHEREAS, the claims of these elements have been recklessly magnified by certain segments of the national media;

WHEREAS, this series of actions is hurting the Philippine

State-by obstructing governance including hindering the growth of the economy and sabotaging the people's confidence in government and their faith in the future of this country;

WHEREAS, these actions are adversely affecting the economy;

WHEREAS, these activities give totalitarian forces of both the extreme Left and extreme Right the opening to intensify their avowed aims to bring down the democratic Philippine State;

WHEREAS, Article 2, Section 4 of our Constitution makes the defense and preservation of the democratic institutions and the State the primary duty of Government;

WHEREAS, the activities above-described, their consequences, ramifications and collateral effects constitute a clear and present danger to the safety and the integrity of the Philippine State and of the Filipino people;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested upon me by Section 18, Article 7 of the Philippine Constitution which states that: "The President...whenever it becomes necessary,...may call out (the) armed forces to prevent or suppress...rebellion..." and in my capacity as their Commander-in-Chief, do hereby command the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to maintain law and order throughout the Philippines, prevent or suppress all forms of lawless violence as well any act of insurrection or rebellion and to enforce obedience to all the laws and to all decrees, orders and regulations promulgated by me personally or upon my direction; and as provided in Section 17, Article 12 of the Constitution do hereby declare a State of National Emergency.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Republic of the Philippines to be affixed.

Done in the City of Manila, this 24th day of February, in the year of Our Lord, two thousand and six.

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines

End Text.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eap/manila/index.cfm>

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